

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* East Valley Estates Public Water System, c/o James & Donna Buechle, 390 Columbia Falls Stage Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901
2. *Type of action:* Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit 30018737-76LJ
3. *Water source name:* Groundwater from Two Drilled Wells
4. *Location affected by action:* SE of Section 1, T 28N R 21W, Flathead County.
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met. The applicant has drilled two wells to provide water to a 17 home subdivision. The wells will provide water for domestic and lawn & garden uses with a flow rate of 95 gpm up to 48.6 acre-feet of annual volume.
6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:*
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction) MT State Preservation Office, MT Natural Heritage, MT DEQ and the MT FW & P website.

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: No adverse impact. One well is flowing, the other has a static of 3 feet bgl.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Determination: No impact. There are no streams near this action.

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: Well testing indicates these well are drilled into a very productive aquifer. No impacts to either water quality or supply are expected at the requested pumping rate of 95 gpm.

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Determination: The diversion works are complete and operational at this time.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."

Determination: There were no species of special concern located on this parcel of farm ground.

Wetlands - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

Determination: N.A.

Ponds - For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.

Determination: There are no ponds on this property.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.

Determination: No impacts. This parcel has been productive farm ground for years.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.

Determination: The homeowners will be responsible to control weeds on their properties and in the park area.

AIR QUALITY - Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

Determination: No impacts.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Determination: Any historic sites would have been destroyed years ago by the farming activity on this property.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water, and energy not already addressed.

Determination: None identified by this EA.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: This subdivision has been approved by the Flathead County Planning Board and Flathead County Commissioners.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: No impacts.

HUMAN HEALTH - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: No impacts were identified.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes___ No_X_. If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination:

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? None
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? Some increase in tax revenues from the 17 new homes versus taxes collected on agricultural property.
- (c) Existing land uses? The ground will no longer be farmed.
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? Possible slight impacts.
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? Some impacts due to the 17 new homes in this subdivision.
- (f) Demands for government services? Some impacts due to 17 new families on the site.
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No impacts.
- (h) Utilities? Some impacts due to 17 new homes.
- (i) Transportation? Some impacts due to traffic from the subdivision on Montford Road and entering MT Highway 35.
- (j) Safety? Some due to more traffic and population density.
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None that have not already been identified.

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*** No secondary or cumulative impacts have been identified by this EA. However, over a long period of time, developments such as this may have measurable secondary impacts on the environment.
3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** The information collected indicate that none are justified for this action.
4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** At this time there are no public water services supplied to the area of this action. Since the wells are already drilled and approximately half of the homes are under some stage of completion or construction, this was the only alternative considered. If the action were only in the planning stages, single wells on each lot may be considered, but probably less desirable than the public water system due to the high static water level seen in the subject wells. The No Action alternative would prevent the owners from developing their land and realizing economic opportunity.

PART III. Conclusion

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? Not for an action of this type and magnitude.

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: Because no significant or cumulative impacts were identified in this EA, the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this action.

Name of person responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Wes McAlpin

Title: Water Resources Specialist

Date: June 14, 2006